Create account Log in

Article Talk Read Edit View history Search

WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Navigation
Main page
Contents
Featured content
Current events
Random article
Donate to Wikipedia
Wikimedia Shop

Interaction
Help
About Wikipedia
Community portal
Recent changes
Contact page

Tools
What links here
Related changes
Upload file
Special pages
Permanent link
Page information
Wikidata item
Cite this page

Print/export
Create a book
Download as PDF
Printable version

Languages
العربية
Dansk
Deutsch
Español
فارسی
Français
Ido
Italiano
עברית
Lietuvių
Magyar
Nederlands
日本語
Norsk bokmål
Plattdüütsch
Polski
Português
Русский
Suomi
Svenska
Türkçe
Українська
中文
Edit links

The Breakfast Club

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For the radio show, see The Breakfast Club (radio). For the band, see Breakfast Club (band).

The Breakfast Club is a 1985 American coming of age comedy-drama film written and directed by John Hughes and starring Emilio Estevez, Paul Gleason, Anthony Michael Hall, John Kapelos, Judd Nelson, Molly Ringwald and Ally Sheedy. The storyline follows five teenagers, each a member of a different high school clique, who spend a Saturday in detention together and come to realize that they are all more than their respective stereotypes, while facing a villainous principal.

Critics consider it one of the greatest high school films, as well as one of Hughes' most memorable and recognizable works. The media referred to the film's five main actors as members of a group called the "Brat Pack".

The Breakfast Club

Theatrical release poster

Directed by	John Hughes
Produced by	Ned Tanen John Hughes
Written by	John Hughes
Starring	Emilio Estevez Paul Gleason Anthony Michael Hall John Kapelos Judd Nelson Molly Ringwald Ally Sheedy
Music by	Keith Forsey
Cinematography	Thomas Del Ruth
Edited by	Dede Allen
Production company	A&M Films Channel Productions
Distributed by	Universal Pictures
Release date(s)	February 15, 1985
Running time	97 minutes[1]
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	$1 million
Box office	$51,525,171[2]

Contents

1 Plot
2 Cast
3 Production
3.1 Casting
3.2 Filming
3.3 Themes
4 Release
4.1 Critical reception
4.2 Box office
4.3 American Film Institute lists
4.4 Legacy
4.5 Home media
5 Soundtrack
5.1 Critical reception
6 Parodies
7 References
8 External links

Plot [edit]

On March 24, 1984, five students—"criminal" John Bender, "athlete" Andrew Clark, "brain" Brian Johnson, "basket case" Allison Reynolds, and "princess" Claire Standish—report for Saturday morning detention at Shermer High School in the Chicago suburb of Shermer, Illinois. While not complete strangers, each of them comes from a different clique, and they seem to have nothing in common. They gather in the high school library, where they are instructed by the assistant principal, Richard Vernon, not to speak, move from their seats, or sleep for a period of eight hours, fifty-four minutes (from 7:06 a.m. to 4 p.m.). He assigns a 1,000-word essay to the students in which each must write about who he or she thinks he or she is. He then leaves, returning only occasionally to check on them. Bender, who has a particularly antagonistic relationship with Vernon, ignores the rules and frequently riles up the other students, teasing Brian and Andrew and harassing Claire. Allison is initially quiet except for the occasional random outburst.

The students pass the hours by arguing and smoking marijuana that Bender retrieves from his locker. Gradually, they open up to each other and reveal their deepest personal secrets: Allison is a compulsive liar, Andrew can't think for himself, John comes from a troubled household, Brian has contemplated suicide due to a bad grade, and Claire is a virgin who feels constant pressure from her friends. They also discover that they all have strained relationships with their parents; Allison's parents ignore her, Andrew's father forces him into sports, John's dad abuses him, Brian's parents put immense pressure on him to get good grades, and Claire's divorced parents use her to get back at each other. They fear making the same mistakes as the adults around them. The students realize that despite their

differences, they face similar pressures and complications in their lives.

Towards the end of the day, the other students ask Brian to write the essay that Vernon assigned earlier. Brian does so, but instead of writing about the assigned topic, he writes a letter objecting to Vernon's request to describe who they are, stating that the man has already judged who they are (an athlete, a basket case, a princess, a brain, and a criminal), and that he will not accept any different accounts from them. Brian finishes the essay and leaves it at the table for Vernon to read after they leave. Before the students part ways outside the school, Allison and Andrew kiss, as do Claire and John; Claire gives John one of her diamond earrings as a parting gift. Brian then finishes the narration by signing it as "The Breakfast Club" as the movie ends with John raising his fist up in triumph as he leaves for home. Despite the formed friendships and relationships, whether or not the students returned to their different cliques and never spoke again or remained friends, is unclear.

Cast [edit]

- Emilio Estevez as Andrew "Andy" Clark
- Paul Gleason as Richard "Dick" Vernon, the school assistant principal
- Anthony Michael Hall as Brian Ralph Johnson
- Judd Nelson as John Bender
- Molly Ringwald as Claire Standish
- Ally Sheedy as Allison Reynolds
- John Kapelos as Carl Reed, the school janitor
- Ron Dean as Mr. Clark
- Mercedes Hall as Mrs. Johnson
- John Hughes (*uncredited*) as Mr. Johnson
- Mary Christian as Brian's sister
- Tim Gamble as Mr. Standish
- Perry Crawford as Mr. Reynolds
- Fran Gargano as Mrs. Reynolds

Production [edit]

Casting [edit]

Molly Ringwald and Anthony Michael Hall were both in Hughes' 1984 film *Sixteen Candles*. Towards the end of filming, Hughes asked them both to be in *The Breakfast Club*. Ringwald was originally approached to play the character of Allison Reynolds, but she was "really upset" because she wanted to play Claire. She eventually convinced the director and the studio to give her the part.[3]

Emilio Estevez originally auditioned for the role of John Bender. However, when John Hughes was unable to find someone to play Andrew Clark, Estevez was recast. Nicolas Cage was considered for the role of John Bender, which was the last to be cast, though the role came down to John Cusack and Nelson. Hughes eventually cast Cusack, but decided to replace him with Nelson before shooting began, because Cusack did not look threatening enough for the role. At one point, Hughes got angry at Nelson because he stayed in character by taunting Ringwald off-camera, and the other actors had to convince Hughes not to fire him.[3][4]

Rick Moranis was originally cast as the janitor but left due to creative differences and was replaced by John Kapelos.[5]

Filming [edit]

In 1999, Hughes said that his request to direct the film met resistance and skepticism because he lacked filmmaking experience.[6] Hughes won the investors over with his argument that due to the film's low budget of $1 million and its single-location shoot, the risks involved were minimal.

Hughes originally thought that *The Breakfast Club* would be his directorial debut. Because of his own inexperience, he set the film in one room and wrote it about high school students, who would be played by younger actors.[7]

Principal photography began on March 28, 1984, and ended in May of that year. Filming took place at Maine North High School in Des Plaines, Illinois, which had closed in 1981. (The building was later used for some of the scenes in Hughes's *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, released one year after *The Breakfast Club*.) At the end of the film, John Bender walks through Maine East High School's football field, which is also where some of the outside shots of *Ferris Bueller* were filmed.

The library at Maine North High School was considered too small for the film, so the crew built the set in the school's gymnasium.[8] The actors rehearsed with each other for three weeks and then shot the film in sequence.[9] Some of the posters on the walls during filming of *The Breakfast Club* were still there when *Ferris Bueller* was filmed. On the *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* DVD commentary (featured on the 2004 DVD version), John Hughes revealed that he shot

the two films back-to-back to save time and money, and some outtakes of both films feature elements of the film crews working on the other film.

The first print was 150 minutes long.[10] During a cast reunion in honor of the film's 25th anniversary, Ally Sheedy revealed that it was Hughes' director's cut, but Hughes' widow did not disclose any details concerning its whereabouts.[4]

The film's poster, featuring the five characters huddled together, was photographed by Annie Leibovitz towards the end of shooting. The shot of five actors glaring at the camera influenced the way teen films were marketed from that point on.[11]

Themes [edit]

The main theme of the film is teenage rebellion against authority figures. On the surface, the students have little in common with each other; however, they eventually bond over a common disdain for their parents.[12][13] The main adult character, Mr. Vernon, is not portrayed in a positive light. He consistently talks down to the students and flaunts his authority throughout the film. Bender is the only one who stands up to Vernon.[12]

Stereotyping is another theme. Once the obvious stereotypes are broken down, the characters "empathize with each other's struggles, dismiss some of the inaccuracies of their first impressions, and discover that they are more similar than different."[14]

Release [edit]

Critical reception [edit]

The film holds a 91% "Certified Fresh" rating on the review aggregate website Rotten Tomatoes, based on 44 reviews, with an average score of 7.4/10. The critical consensus is "*The Breakfast Club* is a warm, insightful, and very funny look into the inner lives of teenagers".[15] Review aggregator Metacritic assigned the film a weighted average score of 62% based on 11 reviews from mainstream critics, considered to be "generally favorable reviews".[16]

Box office [edit]

In February 1985, the film debuted at #3 at the box office (behind *Beverly Hills Cop* and *Witness*).[17] Grossing $45,875,171 domestically and $51,525,171 worldwide,[18] the film is a box office success, given its alleged $1 million budget.

American Film Institute lists [edit]

- AFI's 100 Years...100 Songs:
  - "Don't You (Forget About Me)" – Nominated[19]
- AFI's 100 Years...100 Cheers - Nominated[20]
- AFI's 100 Years...100 Movies (10th Anniversary Edition) — Nominated[21]

Legacy [edit]

The Breakfast Club is known as the "quintessential 1980s film" and is considered as one of the best films of 1985.[22] In 2008, it was ranked #369 by *Empire* magazine of their *The 500 Greatest Movies of All Time* list.[23] Similarly, *The New York Times* placed the film on its *Best 1000 Movies Ever* list.[24] The film was ranked number 1 on *Entertainment Weekly's* list of the 50 Best High School Movies.[25]

In 2005, the film received the Silver Bucket of Excellence Award in honor of its 20th anniversary at the *MTV Movie Awards*. For the event, MTV attempted to reunite the original cast. Sheedy, Ringwald, and Hall appeared together on stage, with Kapelos in the audience; Gleason gave the award to his former castmates. Estevez could not attend because of other commitments, and Nelson appeared earlier in the show but left before the on-stage reunion, prompting Hall to joke that the two were "in Africa with Dave Chappelle." Pop-punk band Yellowcard performed the film's anthem, "Don't You Forget About Me."

At the 82nd Academy Awards, Sheedy, Hall, Ringwald, and Nelson all appeared in a tribute to John Hughes, along with other actors who had worked with Hughes, including Jon Cryer from *Pretty in Pink*, Matthew Broderick from *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, and Macaulay Culkin from *Home Alone*.

In the 2001 parody film *Not Another Teen Movie*, Gleason reprised his role as Assistant Principal Vernon in a short scene that parodies *The Breakfast Club*.[26]

On March 7, 2000, the A-Teens released their single for *Dancing Queen* (from their debut album *The ABBA Generation*) by also launching a music video for it. The video itself is a tribute to the movie, with Gleason again reprising his role as Vernon. It features the band and many extras serving as the band's background dancers, as students serving detention in the library, much like the original movie itself. Vernon tells the students that he trusts that they are "looking forward to spending the next four hours--that's 240 long minutes, count 'em--reflecting on your wasted lives." Before leaving, he then warns them not to even think about leaving the room, getting up from their

desks, or talking to each other. As soon as he leaves, Marie, the band's oldest member, takes out her CD player with headphones, inserts the single CD, turns up the volume on the intercom and attaches the headphones to the microphone; thus turning the library into a '70s discotheque and starting the song. Part of the video also takes place on the dining area outside the school building. Towards the end of the video, the scene returns to normal as Vernon returns. He then slams a book on the desk of Amit, the band's second-oldest member, signaling the end of detention. As everyone leaves, the camera can be seen panning over to the intercom and microphone with Marie's CD player and headphones, which he obliviously sees.

Jason Moore's 2012 film Pitch Perfect is about a number of the freshmen from Barden University who choose to join Collegiate A-Cappella groups on campus. Key elements of the film are references to a number of classic films, *The Breakfast Club* amongst them. Jesse, a Barden Treble-maker, tries to woo the protagonist Beca under the pretext of educating her in 'the best scored and sound-tracked' films of all time. *The Breakfast Club*'s anthem, Simple Minds' "Don't You (Forget About Me)," is the song that Beca uses to apologise to Jesse at the end of the film, by weaving it into the Barden Bellas' performance at the ICCA's, (International Championship of Collegiate A-Cappella).

An episode of the Nickelodeon series *Victorious* titled "The Breakfast Bunch" was a parody of this film.

Home media [edit]

In 2003, the film was released on DVD as part of the "High School Reunion Collection".[27] In 2008, a "Flashback Edition" DVD was released with several special features, including an audio commentary with Anthony Michael Hall and Judd Nelson.[28]

A 25th Anniversary Edition Blu-ray was released in 2010,[29] and the same disc was re-released with a DVD and digital copy in 2012 as part of Universal's 100th Anniversary series.[30][31]

Soundtrack [edit]

The Breakfast Club soundtrack album was released in 1985.[32] The album peaked at #17 on the US Billboard 200 album chart. "Don't You (Forget About Me)" reached #1 on the US Hot 100.

1. "Don't You (Forget About Me)" – Simple Minds
2. "Waiting" – E.G. Daily
3. "Fire in the Twilight" – Wang Chung
4. "I'm the Dude" (instrumental) – Keith Forsey
5. "Heart Too Hot to Hold" – Jesse Johnson, Stephanie Spruill
6. "Dream Montage" (instrumental) – Gary Chang
7. "We Are Not Alone" – Karla DeVito
8. "Reggae" (instrumental) – Keith Forsey
9. "Didn't I Tell You?" – Joyce Kennedy
10. "Love Theme" (instrumental) – Keith Forsey

The Breakfast Club (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)	
Soundtrack album by various artists	
Released	February 19, 1985
Recorded	1984
Genre	Rock, new wave
Length	38:02
Label	A&M
Producer	Keith Forsey
Singles from *The Breakfast Club*	
1. "Don't You (Forget About Me)" Released: February 20, 1985 (US), April 8, 1985 (UK)	
Music sample	
"Simple Minds—Don't You (Forget About Me)" Sorry, your browser either has JavaScript disabled or does not have any supported player. You can download the clip or download a player to play the clip in your browser.	

Critical reception [edit]

In a contemporary review for *The Village Voice*, music critic Robert Christgau gave the album a "D-" and said that it has "utterly negligible" songs and "Don't You (Forget About Me)" by Simple Minds, whom he commended for trying to distance themselves from the song.[33] In a retrospective review for AllMusic, Stephen Thomas Erlewine gave it three out of five stars and wrote that, apart from Simple Minds' "undisputed masterpiece", the album is largely "disposable" and marred by "'80s artifacts" and "forgettable instrumentals."[34]

Parodies [edit]

The film was revisited in a 2010 adult movie titled *The Breakfast Club: A XXX Parody* .

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External links [edit]

- *The Breakfast Club* at the Internet Movie Database
- *The Breakfast Club* at Box Office Mojo
- *The Breakfast Club* at Rotten Tomatoes
- *The Breakfast Club* at Metacritic
- *The Breakfast Club* DVD official Universal Studios website

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Writer only	*National Lampoon's Class Reunion* (1982) · *Mr. Mom* (1983) · *National Lampoon's Vacation* (1983) · *Nate and Hayes* (1983) · *National Lampoon's European Vacation* (1985) · *Pretty in Pink* (1986) · *Some Kind of Wonderful* (1987) · *The Great Outdoors* (1988) · *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* (1989) · *Home Alone* (1990) · *Career Opportunities* (1991) · *Dutch* (1991) · *Beethoven* (1992) · *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York* (1992) · *Dennis the Menace* (1993) · *Baby's Day Out* (1994) · *Miracle on 34th Street* (1994) · *101 Dalmatians* (1996) · *Flubber* (1997) · *Home Alone 3* (1997) · *Reach the Rock* (1998) · *Just Visiting* (2001) · *Maid in Manhattan* (2002, story) · *Drillbit Taylor* (2008, original character) ·

v · t · e ·	**Brat Pack**
Members	Emilio Estevez · Anthony Michael Hall · Rob Lowe · Andrew McCarthy · Demi Moore · Judd Nelson · Molly Ringwald · Ally Sheedy ·
Films	*The Outsiders* · *Class* · *Sixteen Candles* · *Oxford Blues* · ***The Breakfast Club*** · *St. Elmo's Fire* · *Pretty in Pink* · *Blue City* · *About Last Night* · *Wisdom* · *Fresh Horses* · *Betsy's Wedding* · *Hail Caesar* ·

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